

Aargau: For All Your Banking Needs

Planet Hoppers: August 2003

By [Cory Herndon](#)

Welcome to "Planet Hoppers," a new feature on the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* website. Each month, we'll bring you a set of articles on a particular world in the *Star Wars* galaxy that a Gamemaster can use separately or as a linked series of events.

This month, we'll get a great interest rate on political intrigue and explore the drama of high finance with a visit to Aargau, the banking center of the galaxy during the Rebellion era. Be sure to check back each week for the next installment!

Part 1: Three Simple Laws

In which a seasoned customs agent advises a newcomer on the statutes of Aargau (and where to find a decent bantha steak).

Part 2: Secure Lines of Credit

In which a senior customs agent trains a new recruit on the security holoscanner, which keeps anyone from leaving Aargau with more than they brought in.

Part 3: Now 99% Crime Free

In which Sergeant Rolex helps catch a smuggler working for Li-Suun Niik, the biggest and most elusive criminal on Aargau.

Part 4: Checks, Balances, and Overdrafts

In which Princess Leia and Darth Vader completely miss the point of Aargau's annual "Take Your Daughter to Work Day."

About the Author

One-time *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* editor Cory J. Herndon is now a freelancer. Cory's work has appeared in *Amazing Stories*, *Duelist*, *TopDeck*, *Star Wars Gamer*, *Dragon*, and *SCIFI.com*. He has done additional design work on the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* revised core rulebook (primarily the Droids chapter), *The Dark Side Sourcebook* (creatures and archetypes), and the *Wheel of Time Roleplaying Game*. He is also the author of Volumes 5 and 6 of the **Magic: The Gathering Encyclopedia**. Cory's short story "Like Spider's Silk" appears in the *Secrets of Magic* Anthology. He asks that you please purchase a copy of it and the **D&D** novel *The Living Dead* for every room in your home. Cory is currently authoring original content for Xbox.com, writing the third book in an upcoming *Magic: The Gathering* novel trilogy, and continuing to design *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* material for the Wizards website.

Learn more than you probably ever wanted to know about Cory at www.hernco.net.

Part 1: Three Simple Laws

Long a bastion of neutrality during the Empire's conflict with the upstart Rebel Alliance, the spectacular wealth and well-trained security forces of the banking center Aargau provided ostensibly demilitarized ground. Here, both sides could engage in the business of war without risk of attack. At least, that's how it was supposed to work, and at one time it did. But like the Republic itself, Aargau fell prey to the sickness of corruption that eventually resulted in the Clone Wars and Palpatine's ascension.

Though possessed of a long, prosperous, and noble history, Aargau at the height of the Empire's power had its share of womp rats creeping amongst the banthas. Average Aargauuns now looked the other way at misdemeanor crimes -- that is, anything not covered by the Three Statutes. Not long after escaping Darth Vader's grasp in Cloud City, Princess Leia Organa boldly faced him on Aargau to ensure a much-needed loan for the Alliance. She learned the hard way that such "misdemeanors" included unarmed homicide between off-worlders.

Planet: Aargau

Planet Type: Terrestrial

Climate: Temperate

Terrain: Cities, gardens, mountains, forests, jungles, rivers, oceans.

Atmosphere: Breathable

Gravity: Standard

Diameter: 12,928 km

Length of Day: 24 standard hours

Length of Year: 364 local days

Sentient Species: Humans, droids, aliens

Language: Basic

Population: 4.8 billion

Species Mix: 84% Human, 12% droids, 4% other

Government: Representative Council of Citizens

Major Exports: Precious metals, bankers

Major Imports: Financial assets

System/Star: Zug

Planets	Type	Moons
Aaghra	Molten rock	0
Zaur	Methane ocean	0
Aargau	Terrestrial	1
Azameen	Arid terrestrial	2
The Coins of Gauha	Asteroid belt	–
Zauhu	Gas giant	47
Urazuun	Gas giant	38
Faargau	Gas giant	14
Laazrau	Gas giant	13
Uluu	Ice ball	1

Sector: Core Worlds

Operation Third Law: Mission Debriefing Transcript 3, Excerpt 19

Subject: Protocol droid designated C-3PO

Property of: Alliance Intelligence

C-3PO: As a first-time visitor to Aargau, I naturally wanted to learn more about this magnificent place, which was a fascinating and beautiful achievement of luxury, opulence, and technological achievement. And the droids! So many rare, expensive models I'd never had the opportunity to meet before. Why, did you know they welcomed us with a recording unit that I happen to know can translate over four



million forms of communication? A droid with such a pedigree, performing tasks more suited to an R2 unit! No offense, Artoo.

R2-D2: [BINARY]

C-3PO: Of course, I didn't mean you. But thank the maker I had an oil bath and a good molecular polish before exiting our vessel. What? I needed one? Why you little --

[BINARY EXCHANGE DELETED]

Intelligence Agent Syril: If we could --

C-3PO: Certainly, sir. I must admit -- in the interest of accuracy for your records, sir -- that this mission may not have been a success without my contributions, in fact. Oh, did I mention the Garden of Butterflies in the capitol? New Escrow? I once belonged to an expert in butterflies, and the Aargauuns have assembled the most remarkable collection!

Intelligence Agent Syril: Yes. You mentioned the butterflies.

C-3PO: And the architecture of the roads, the overpasses, the highways, of all things? The architecture in the capitol? New Escrow.

Agent Syril: I know the capitol is called New Escrow. Yes, you said the architecture . . . let me see . . . "These magnificent roadways allow New Escrow to eschew the utilitarian tangle of aircar traffic that makes so many other metropolitan planets so frightfully dangerous," and "the wealth of the planet and its citizens, which I believe comes not only from banking and finance, but also vast, untouched reserves of the most precious metals in the galaxy, is evident everywhere." You went on to describe your experience as a "welcome respite from the drab confines of these dreadful starships" and thanked your maker for "a break from the unwashed, uncouth enlisted troops that are packed into the bloody spacegoing deathtraps like --" Okay, you know what? I'm not going to keep reading this stuff back to you. We're running three hours long as it is.

C-3PO: Of course, sir. Where was I? Oh yes. The customs station was positively swimming with off-world visitors from a thousand planets, and the constant and reassuring presence of the Bank of Aargau's security forces. It was here that I learned about the Statutes of Aargau, the only three laws on the planet. Shall I recite them?

Agent Syril: Why not?

C-3PO: Wonderful! The signpost at customs read as follows:

ON AARGAU, THESE CRIMES ARE PUNISHABLE BY IMMEDIATE EXECUTION:

1. The unlawful removal of precious metals.
2. The unlawful possession of weapons by noncitizens. (Conversely, it is unlawful for citizens to be unarmed.)
3. Willfully conspiring to defraud, discredit, or deceive the Bank of Aargau.

(Continued in file O3L-E20)

Part 2: Secure Lines of Credit

The Bank of Aargau -- the central financial institution and planetwide governing corporation serving citizens of that wealthy and well-armed neutral world -- personally hires, trains, and maintains the largest private army known to exist during the Emperor's reign. Bank of Aargau Security, Ltd., a wholly owned subsidiary of the Bank of Aargau, runs every aspect of planetary defense, from customs to military actions to personal protection for the wealthiest citizens.

Visiting dignitaries almost always receive a front-row seat for the frequent war games played around the capitol. The demonstrations serve to keep security forces in top fighting condition and provide shrewd tactical public relations on the part of BAS. Many Aargauuns believed this military might kept their neutrality secure, but the simple truth was that too many Imperials -- including at least one Dark Lord of the Sith -- maintained vast numbered accounts there. Seizing the world to exploit its resources would be impractical and enormously unpopular both within the Empire and without.



I find your interest rates disturbing.

BAS serves one purpose above all others: to enforce the Statutes of Aargau. And while all divisions do their best to ensure that those who violate the sacred laws receive swift, deadly punishment, the men and women of BAS Customs deal most often with attempts to skirt the first and second laws.

Planetary Customs Security Checkpoint LH48

Sergeant-at-Arms' Daily Log

Record Number 31489384923889348.87.43993.4.20399.3.422/b/f.K.55

Sgt. Rolex Recording

May the Sacred Balance Look with Favor on the Honored Depositors.

Hour 1: Arrived at work 10 minutes early, as usual, to ensure smooth transition of labor at Checkpoint LH48. Processed 8 visitors -- Twi'lek nobles from Coruscant. 8 diplomatic pouches declared. Slow morning.

Hour 2: The new security officer assigned to replace Captain Ryyts has arrived, 1 hour behind schedule. Captain Smalyun apologized profusely and assured both myself and the night-shift officer-on-duty that his alarm failed, and he requested the incident not be included in the official record. Processed 32 visitors (including 4 droids). 28 diplomatic pouches declared.

Hour 3: Captain Smalyun has requested a demonstration of the customs holoscanner. He reports that the newest model has not been covered by his training, and he wants to know "what's different." I informed him that the newest model had improved imaging detail, simplified controls, and a caf dispenser. He didn't get it. He insists on an operation demonstration, which I have offered to give after the mid-day meal period. Processed 40 visitors (including 12 droids), 28 diplomatic pouches declared.

Hour 4: Mid-day meal period. Chef served a delightful grik bisque, followed by a salad of Alderaanian greens topped with crushed pulta nuts and a spicy Corellian vinaigrette. Today's entrée was fish.

Hour 5: I may have underestimated this new recruit. He's obviously fresh out of officer's training, but Captain Smalyun has mastered the customs holoscanner in record time. Another credit to BAS training, thank the balance. Processed 27 visitors, 27 diplomatic pouches declared.

May the Sacred Balance Look with Favor on the Honored Depositors.

Bank of Aargau Security BAS44 Customs-Grade Holoscanner

While hologram technology predates the Republic itself, holoscanning equipment capable of accurately and safely portraying the insides of a sentient being weren't developed until a few thousand years ago. Not surprisingly, BAS holds the patent. Even less surprising, the official BAS press release for the device claimed that the mere announcement of the BAS44 resulted in a 14 percent drop in smuggling incidents over the six months preceding the official product launch.

BAS Research & Development released the BAS44 and equipped all customs stations with the security tool not long after the Battle of Hoth. The device resembles a small computer with an oversized monitor large enough to scan a square area measuring 2 meters by 2 meters. When leaving Aargau, every departing individual simply stands on the far side of the screen, and the holoscanner transmits a molecular-level three-dimensional image for the operator to examine. Touch-sensitive focusing controls allow the user isolate any part of the subject's body for display -- typically, the skeleton, digestive tract, and circulatory systems receive the sharpest scrutiny. The expensive BAS44 is found exclusively on Aargau and is available for sale only to Aargauun citizens . . . officially. Unofficially, a few have made it past customs and into the hands of the paranoid wealthy class of the Core.

While the user-friendly controls let anyone operate an unsecured BAS44 holoscanner with an untrained DC 5 Computer Use check, most units are usually locked with a secure password that requires a trained DC 35 Computer Use check to gain access. Once the scan is initiated, the operator may attempt to Spot contraband for one minute (up to ten consecutive checks). The Gamemaster sets specific Spot DCs for any contraband. The user can choose to make fewer than ten checks, of course, and also may skip any Spot check to attempt a Sense Motive check on the scan subject that adds a +2 circumstance bonus to all Spot rolls for the rest of that minute.

Exposure longer than one minute causes harm to the subject (2d4 points of energy damage per round while being scanned), so the BAS44 incorporates an automatic shut-off switch that runs on a one-minute timer. The timer can be shut down with a DC 25 Disable Device check, though this violates the warranty.

Cost: 300,000

Weight: 110 kg

Part 3: Now 99% Crime Free

Planetary Customs Security Checkpoint LH48

Sergeant-at-Arms' Hourly Incident Log

Incident Number: 384

Report Number 9878740384.879945.54981.050028.22659716/G/i/48

Sgt. Rolex Recording

May the Sacred Balance Look with Favor on the Honored Depositors.

During the sixth hour of my shift we had an incident involving a smuggler that had to be one of Li-Suun Niik's boys. Only Niik would be crazy enough and cruel enough -- not to mention clever enough -- to pull a stunt like this. It was an honor to once again protect the Balance from his depraved practices.

The suspect passed through outgoing customs just as I was explaining the sacred Statutes to Leia Organa and her companion, the Viscount Tardi. Though I had not met the Princess of Alderaan before, the viscount is, of course, a well-known off-world financier with, I must admit, a better understanding of the ceremonies and protocols of our world than some citizens I know. It may please the Depositors to know that the princess and the viscount were visibly impressed by what happened next.

Captain Smalyun had taken over operation of the holoscanner. As outgoing traffic was light at the time, I felt he could use the experience, and the new officer seemed to be performing adequately. It baffles me that he missed the contraband, but I must assume this was due to his inexperience with the device. Fortunately, I caught the glint of metal on the holoscanner screen from my post at incoming inspections and pointed out what Smalyun had missed. The current scan subject had Aargauun gold bonded to two of his ribs!

Once the alarm was raised, the incident was soon over. Smalyun, no doubt chastened by his earlier error, immediately opened fire on the smuggler, and the rest of Checkpoint LH48's security personnel followed suit.

I would be remiss if I did not inform the Depositors that despite our success this hour, I suspect Niik's smugglers have begun to operate with more frequency. Worse, they may have connections within the citizenry, perhaps even within BAS.



Li-Suun Niik's Alliance Intelligence Profile

The mysterious Li-Suun Niik operates in shadows on rigidly law-abiding Aargau, his exact personal whereabouts almost impossible to pinpoint. No one but Niik (a moniker that's likely just an alias) knows the details of his origin and how he became the biggest -- some say *only* -- criminal mastermind on the banking planet. No one can even say for certain whether Niik is an off-worlder or a native. Yet his criminal tendencies would represent an extremely aberrant behavior for any Aargauun.

What is known about Li-Suun Niik? Distressingly little. In the years following the Empire's ascension to galactic dominance, his name first began to circulate on the BAS watch list, suspected of fraud against the Bank of Aargau. Though he has been linked to a number of activities, he focuses mainly on electronic theft (of information or credits) and precious metals smuggling, as Sgt. Rolex learned. For most of the Rebellion era, it appears that he controlled or had a hand in almost every major crime committed on the planet. And despite their best efforts, Niik's operation never sold out to the Hutts or to Black Sun.

To this day, Niik is the only individual in Aargauun history to deprive the BoA of more than one hundred credits and remain at large. Since that time, his organization is believed to have grown to include hundreds of individuals -- not large by galactic standards, but a major crime gang on Aargau. And Niik doesn't need thousands of loyal minions to grow rich on a planet that's literally and figuratively built on wealth. What he does require is a small group of loyal followers who can evade the well-trained troops of the BAS, and a network of smugglers and mules

that can get contraband off the planet.

Game Notes

Daring heroes with no love for the law might be able to find work with Li-Suun Niik by carefully asking around in the spacer cantinas at New Escrow Starport (the GM can add a 50 percent chance that any such inquiry will draw the attention of undercover BAS agents). If the heroes can impress Niik's agents, they might get a job smuggling goods, stealing information, or performing some other criminal activity. If the heroes impress Niik himself, they might even get a chance to meet him.

More honorable heroes can find freelance work with the BAS hunting down elements of Niik's growing criminal empire. The company is not above hiring off-world mercenaries when they're needed.

Li-Suun Niik has a secret not known to even his closest advisers: He has a connection to the Force, which explains a great deal of his success over the years, even though it appears he is entirely self-trained. Vader and Palpatine have no doubt sensed his presence on their visits to Aargau, but have thus far left the rogue Force-using criminal to his own devices.

Li-Suun Niik: Male Human Force Adept 3/Scoundrel 4/Noble 1/Crime Lord 8; Init +5; Defense 20 (+9 class,+1 Dex); Spd 10 m; VP/WP 63/11; Atk +9/+4 melee (1d3, punch) or +11/+6 melee (DC 18, masterwork stun baton [attack +2]) or +9/+4 melee (2d4+2, masterwork vibrodagger [damage +2]) or +12/+7 ranged (3d8+3, masterwork heavy blaster pistol [attack +3, damage +3]); SQ Bonus class skill (Bluff), contact (BAS Captain Smalyun), contact (Depositor Councilwoman Balazausa), contact (unknown, possibly Imperial), exceptional minions, favor +1, Force training, inspire fear -4, lucky (1/day), precise attack +1, resource access; SV Fort +5, Ref +12, Will +15; SZ M; FP 6; DSP 23; Rep +11; Str 10, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 18, Wis 17, Cha 20; Challenge Code G.

Equipment: Encrypted comlinks (6), masterwork heavy blaster pistol, masterwork stun baton, masterwork vibrodagger, expensive clothes, numerous personal vehicles and starships.

Force Skills: Affect Mind +20, Force Grip +10, Force Stealth +24, Heal Self +10, Illusion +26, Move Object +10, Drain Energy +6.

Skills: Appraise +23, Bluff +24, Computer Use +26, Diplomacy +16, Disable Device +14, Gather Information +24, Hide +7, Knowledge (Aargau) +23, Listen +9, Read/Write Basic, Read/Write Sith, Read/Write Ancient Aargauese, Sense Motive +9, Speak Ancient Aargauese, Speak Basic, Speak Binary, Speak Huttese, Speak Sith, Spot +9.

Force Feats: Alter, Control.

Feats: Burst of Speed, Focus, Force-sensitive, Infamy, Mind Trick, Skill Emphasis (Affect Mind), Skill Emphasis (Force Stealth), Skill Emphasis (Computer Use), Stealthy, Weapon Group Proficiencies (primitive weapons, simple weapons)

Part 4: Checks, Balances, and Overdrafts

Trials in Absentia

Bank of Aargau vs. Vader

Bank of Aargau vs. Organa

Customs Field Investigator Sergeant Rolex Testimony Transcript

May the Sacred Balance Look with Favor on the Honored Depositors.

My recent investigation into the incidents coinciding with the recent visit to Aargau of two prominent leaders on opposite sides of the Rebellion conflict has yielded a number of intriguing clues. I believe I have pieced together the series of events that led to the shocking discoveries made at New Escrow's Old Spaceport facility, which as you know was recently converted into a history museum. Perhaps most surprisingly, my investigation indicates no connection between these incidents and Li-Suun Niik's criminal gang, though I hope some promising data fragments may soon prove that Niik had some connection. Here are the basics as far as I've been able to ascertain.

Princess Leia Organa, an acknowledged leader of the Rebels and a genuine blue-blood from recently destroyed Alderaan, arrived with Viscount Tardi -- at least, at the time I believed it was Tardi -- at Checkpoint LH48. The princess and viscount had arrived to complete a loan that would help replenish the Rebel fleet, as I understand. On her heels was Lord Darth Vader, ostensibly on Imperial business. Evidence indicates, however, that Lord Vader's presence was anything but coincidental. As noted in the entry records, Vader arrived with three attendants: a porter native to the high-gravity world Rigel VII, a secretary that I believe was a shapeshifter, and a valet who, I learned, was a member of a powerfully telekinetic species. Interestingly, all three represented species listed as nearly extinct in the Great Databank of Aargau. According to my sources, each was a bonded member of the assassin's guild specializing in unarmed killing.



Over the course of the next few days, Vader's attendants made bold individual attempts on Tardi's life. Holofile 3F shows the damage that resulted from the first attack. The Rigellian leapt from an overpass onto a taxi speeder carrying the princess, the "viscount," and their droids. The impact of the massive brute totaled the speeder, but eyewitnesses report the princess quickly dispatched the would-be assassin by using a standard gravitational field disruptor, available in most spaceport duty-free shops, to exponentially increase the Rigellian's weight. I believe his remains are now in the planet's core, and therefore irretrievable. Incidentally, I recommend putting field disruptors on the list of proscribed weapons immediately.

See evidence bag 4A for the second assassin's remains. As you can see, the shapeshifter had taken the form of an extinct poisonous butterfly, proof positive that what you see is not truly an insect. He apparently hoped to strike at the princess and the "viscount" during a ceremony at the Garden of Butterflies with his poisonous stinger. Apparently, the Rebel leader's own protocol droid happened also to be an insect expert and spotted the ersatz butterfly in time to warn the assassin's targets. The damage to the specimen was inflicted by Princess Organa's boot.

Princess Organa herself personally described Vader's final assassination attempt to me. As Vader and Organa

sparred verbally, the telekinetic assassin attempted to bring a low-yield antipersonnel missile down from orbit onto Viscount Tardi's head. Since the alien had to "see" his target through the electronic eyes of the missile he controlled, Organa's astromech droid was able to trick the assassin into unintentional suicide by broadcasting a color hologram of Tardi over the assassin himself.

The final confrontation appears to have taken place at the Old Spaceport around midnight, hours before both defendants departed Aargau. Vader and the princess apparently arranged to meet, perhaps to settle their scores once and for all, at this location. Security holocams caught much of the conversation and subsequent events, which revealed that both had smuggled weapons onto the planet in their sealed diplomatic pouches, and that "Viscount Tardi" was a cleverly programmed but nonsentient automaton -- the real Tardi, it appears, has been deceased for over a month. But since the Rebels' loan has already been completed and sealed, this obviously does not negate the loan approval. However, I do recommend that the Customs division heads reconsider the policy against searching diplomatic pouches.

The final element of this curious crime spree caught me completely by surprise, and will likely be impossible to prosecute -- Darth Vader somehow acquired the Crown Jewels of Alderaan, which the princess had put up as collateral for the loan. It appears this was the Sith Lord's goal all along, as Tardi's artificial nature came as no surprise to Vader. Furthermore, no records exist of any transaction that would have left the Jewels in Vader's grasp. Which leaves us with two outstanding mysteries: How did Vader do it, and why? Is the Sith Lord so spiteful that he would take the jewels simply to crush the princess's spirit?

In closing, I regret to report that I do not believe these gross violations of all three Aargauun Statutes will be successfully punished in the near future. However, barring any further revelations, I recommend that Leia Organa and/or Darth Vader be arrested on sight if either returns to Aargau.

The Third Law!

The banking planet Aargau, where almost anything can get in and virtually nothing can get out (without the proper authorization), is one of many unique and memorable planets from the Marvel *Star Wars* comic book series to make the sanctioned leap into the Expanded Universe. Aargau first appeared in issue #48, an early post-*Empire* story called "The Third Law!" that set Leia against Vader in what the previous issue's hype box billed as a "game of diplomatic derring-do."

Larry Hama's tale is packed with dark humor that didn't often appear in the series during the "Frozen Han" period, following a complicated plot filled with Hitchcockian turns, shocking surprises, and -- yep -- derring-do aplenty, diplomatic and otherwise.



And it wouldn't be the early 1980s proto-Expanded Universe without some . . . creative artistic choices and story points. Vader's assassin-secretary resembles a blended clone of Mr. Spock and Count Chocula. Leia uses a density-adjusting kajigger on one of Vader's evil henchmen, a pocket-sized superweapon that never again reappears in the series.

If you can't find a copy of *Star Wars* #48, you can read the story in the Dark Horse Comics reprint *A Long Time Ago . . . Vol. 3: Resurrection of Evil*. Legendary Bullpen scribe Larry Hama wrote "The Third Law!" with art by the equally legendary Carmine Infantino and Carlos Garzon.